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SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

G/TIP, G, INL, DRL, PRM, IWI, WHA/PPC

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SUBJECT: TIPS REPORT - FOURTH ANNUAL - BAHAMAS

REF: A. SECSTATE 07869

B. SECSTATE 27013

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OVERVIEW

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¶1. (SBU) There is no currently-available indication of trafficking in persons in, from, or through The Bahamas. Although migrant smuggling and drug trafficking are serious problems for The Bahamas, no evidence is available to show that men, women, or children are being forced by coercion or fraud into domestic servitude, sexual exploitation or other slavery-like labor. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Labor and Immigration know of no instances in which trafficking in persons has been an issue or even alleged. However, these ministries were receptive to offers of prevention training and assistance by the United States Government. Post considers these sources to be highly credible.

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PREVENTION

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¶2. (SBU) The Royal Bahamas Police Force, the Ministry of Labor and Immigration and the Attorney General's Office would become the responsible agencies involved if the Bahamas ever receives an allegation of, or information about, trafficking in persons. To date, the Bahamas has not instituted an education campaign on this matter as there is no evidence of a need. The Government of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas (GCOB) actively promotes womens' rights and equality of opportunity in both government and the private sector. Currently, four of sixteen cabinet ministers are women. Bahamian children are required to remain in school until the age of 16, generally do so, and are therefore less vulnerable to human traffickers.

¶3. (SBU) The financial resources of the Bahamas are limited, but the Bahamian government would most likely be willing to support a campaign to prevent or counteract human trafficking should it become a significant issue given its long history of support for human rights. Little interaction, if any, has taken place between NGOs and the GCOB to date because of the fact that a trafficking problem has not been identified.

¶4. (SBU) Given the geography and lay-out of the Bahamas, border control is of utmost importance to the Bahamian Government, which looks to the United States Coast Guard to help the Royal Bahamas Defence Force protect its borders. Illegal migrants, most often from Haiti and Cuba, travel through the Bahamas on their way to the United States. Many stop in The Bahamas and settle permanently. While the government is extremely concerned with illegal migration, government officials make no distinction between illegal migration and human trafficking. Therefore, a separate program for monitoring of this issue is not available. The government is dedicated to stemming illegal migration and cooperates closely with U.S. efforts to interdict both migrants and narcotics passing through or to the Bahamas. Currently, the Bahamian government does not have a national plan of action to combat trafficking in persons.

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INVESTIGATION AND PROSECUTION OF TRAFFICKERS

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¶5. (SBU) The Bahamas does not have a law specifically prohibiting trafficking in persons. However, traffickers can be prosecuted under Title XIX of the penal code - Crimes Against Females, and of Kidnapping and Abduction - for attempts to force a woman by threats, intimidation, false pretenses or illegal drugs to do something against her will. There are also provisions against forcibly taking or detaining women or children. Prison terms vary from two years to life in prison, depending on the crime committed. The penalties for rape or forcible sexual assault range from a minimum of seven years to a maximum of life imprisonment. Taken together, these laws are believed sufficient to cover

trafficking in persons concerns should a case ever be brought to trial.

16. (SBU) In June 2001, the government ratified ILO Convention 182 Concerning the Profession and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor. The GCOB is a party to the Rights of the Child Convention, but not the Sale of Children Protocol. The GCOB signed the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, supplementing the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime on April 9, 2001, but has yet to ratify it.

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PROTECTION AND ASSISTANCE TO VICTIMS
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17. (SBU) Due to the lack of evidence of trafficking in persons in, or through, The Bahamas, the government does not provide funds to NGOs to protect or assist victims. Similarly, The Bahamas does not provide specialized training for government officials in the provision of assistance to trafficked victims, nor does it emphasize the issue with its consulates and embassies abroad. Children are frequently among the illegal immigrants interdicted and sent to the migrant detention center pending repatriation. Although there are some provisions made for their safety and special needs, no educational or recreational materials are provided for these children (many of whom are not English-speaking) on the assumption that their stay will be of limited duration.

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NOTE
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18. (U) The principal drafter for this year's TIPS Report is Stacie M. Zerdecki. She can be contacted at the following:
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